

# Utah Historical Quarterly

State Capitol, Salt Lake City

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July, 1932

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## EARLY PRINTING IN UTAH OUTSIDE OF SALT LAKE CITY

By Douglas C. McMurtrie

The activities of the printing press in the early days of Salt Lake City have received a certain amount of attention from general historians and from students of journalistic and typographic history. But our knowledge of pioneer printing in Utah communities outside of Salt Lake City is regrettably scant and unsatisfactory. The present resumé of the record of the Utah country press in its beginnings is here set forth in the hope that its publication will elicit from authorities on local history some information that will add to the little we know about the pioneer printers.

Except for the printing done at Fillmore when the official press of the **Deseret News** was driven to that point<sup>1</sup> during the military disturbances of 1858, the first appearance outside of Salt Lake City of a regularly established Utah printing plant was in 1863. In that year, Joseph E. Johnson, a Mormon who had come to Utah from Nebraska in 1861, established a semi-monthly agricultural periodical called the **Farmer's Oracle**. The only issue of this paper which I have been able to find is in the Bancroft Library of the University of California. It is Volume 1, No. 9, and its date line reads "Spring Lake Villa, Utah County, Utah, Tuesday, September 22, 1863." Spring Lake Villa was a small settlement between Payson and Santaquin, some fifty or sixty miles south of Salt Lake City. Its few inhabitants abandoned the place later in the sixties because of trouble with the Indians.

The date of the ninth issue of the **Oracle** indicates a beginning in July, or perhaps June, 1863. The copy before us contains an apology for "having missed the date of one number" because of the fact that "circumstances over which we had no control have denied us paper, and even the lean supply at present is of in-

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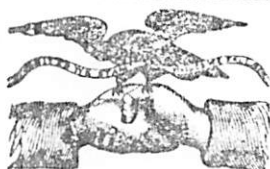
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## Farmers' Oracle!

Published the first and third Tuesday in each month.

J. E. JOHNSON, EDITOR & PUBLISHER.  
W. D. JOHNSON, - - - PROPRIETOR.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS.** Per Annum, - - - \$2.  
**ADVERTISEMENTS.** 10 cents per line, each insertion. A fair discount for liberal and early advertisements. Funeral and Ordinary Notices, and Requests of Attendants, Manufacturing and Literary Societies, and Fairs published without charge.

All correspondence must be addressed to the Editor, Spring Lake Villa.

### Salutatory.

We are pleased once more to say to our friends, old and new, one and all, how d'ye do? Fate, or some well-meaning power, places us again upon the tripod, and so we submit, with this our best bow and a grand flourish of our feather. As we have eschewed politics, we come now to the aid of a science more pleasant, profitable and successful, and hope our change will not worse our readers. Our interests now will be to raise potatoes instead of armies—to count cabbage instead of votes—to stick our "poll" for beans, instead of members of Congress—our "beets" will be of the scarlet sort—our "clubs" of the gourd species—our "stump" meetings where our cabbage seed grows, and our "great gatherings" in autumn—from the garden.

Such is life—all change—

"Ah, methinks there is Earth's various range,  
Which time and seasons may not surely change."

It is our desire to be useful (as well as ornamental), and so if you like to try us once more, come on, and we will promise the best we have. We want to live with you here, and earn our way among you, and this last we are determined to do. So here's our hand!

### Our Paper.—The Prospect.

We wish to say to our patrons that we have commenced the publication of the *Oracle* under circumstances rather discouraging to the dollar-and-cent interest of the publisher; situated far away from markets where necessary material can only be obtained, and purchased at great expense, for cash only. Then we are sadly annoyed for want of an exchange that can be easily handled

and transported at small expense; then again our little paper is an innovation upon our customs and habits, consequently many will argue that, as they have got along first-rate without such an institution, they can profitably continue without, and will scarce discover their mistake until the progress of improvement has left them far behind.

We earnestly believe that our valleys and adjacent mountains contain the elements for our necessities, and material enough to make comfortable and enrich its inhabitants; yet it takes science, skill, industry, perseverance and application to bring out the hidden wealth, and develop the many comforts. Few countries ever offered a wider field for the industrious, the energetic or scientific in the various details of home industry. The farmer, through his own and the experience of others, finds room for great improvement in the quantity of his crops with less than former labor. His stock may be improved and increased when an interchange of experience is adopted. The pomologist may learn where is to be obtained the best stock of fruits, and teach and learn the best modes of cultivation, propagation, &c. The mechanic falls into the advancing column, and produces, with less labor and expense, the necessities of life, and soon, by division of labor and union of means and strength, our artisans may stay importations by supplying all our most important wants. With a limited research, discoveries have already been made of fine beds of stone coal, gypsum (plaster of Paris), salt, brimstone, salicatus, copperas, alum, nitre, borax, iron, lead, and some other valuable metals, as well as springs of coal oil, mineral or chalybeate waters of rare medicinal virtue; limestone, chalk and colored earths may also be enumerated.

Now with the farmer and stock-grower, producing a surplus of cereals, vegetables, fruits, wool and cotton, and the industry of the mechanic showing itself in rearing of better and more extended machinery; our chymist dissolving, purifying, melting and bringing to perfection our minerals, we only need the aid of science and the blessings of Heaven to lead us on with gigantic strides to an elevated and envious position among the sisterhood of States.

We feel a sort of inspiration to attempt assistance in this great cause that underlies our prosperity, and is the foundation of all social enjoyment, wealth and power.

Those who feel the importance of this subject should enlighten his neighbor, and awaken a thirst for intelligence and knowledge in every branch of domestic economy and industry, and whilst we strive to assist you, let us not faint for want of sustenance. Should life and health be spared, we expect that the *Oracle* will be published one year, whether well or poorly sustained.

### What Fruits shall we grow!

The above subject gives a broad field for comment, and in the present number can only make a contracted prelude to a subject of such importance, but in future issues we purpose making this a prominent feature in the *Oracle*.

Fruit, in proper or extended variety, may constitute much of the material of human existence, and taking all the range of climate in our Territory, we may produce all of the most important varieties cultivated on this continent. Among the most staple of these are the early berries, such as strawberries, currants, gooseberries, raspberries and mulberries; the cherry, apricot, peach, plum, grape, apple, and pear. Of these and many other varieties, experience has proven to be not only quite hardy, but from the abundance of fruit and rich flavor, we find the soil and atmosphere congenial to their growth. Then we may answer the question above in rather a broad sense, and reply, grow every variety of fruit whose tree or shrub may be protected from the frosts of winter. This question settled, our next in order is the easiest, best and cheapest manner of producing the stock, starting from the seed, and covering the whole interim of their growth. First the nursery, then the soil most proper, time and mode of removing to, and care of, the orchard.

We hope our prominent fruit-growers will communicate the result of their experience in every branch of this subject, for we shall be glad to present the same to our readers. We shall, from time to time, detail our limited observations and experiments. We have introduced into this Territory quite a number of new varieties, and our experience in growing and propagating may be advantageous. We would say to nurserymen that now is the time to order seeds of every sort of fruit, evergreens and ornamental trees and shrubbery.

Setting aside the comfort and convenience of having an abundance of fruit in variety, there is now no crop grown that pays as well as fruit; and in a country

different quality." The quality of the paper was indeed "indifferent," and the printing on it muddy and inferior.

The **Oracle** consisted of eight small pages to an issue, three columns to the page. J. E. Johnson was the editor, and W. D. Johnson was named as proprietor. In Nebraska, Editor Johnson had been concerned with several publishing enterprises.<sup>2</sup> In Utah he did not confine himself to his paper as a means of livelihood. Advertisements in the pages of the **Oracle** disclose the fact that he had for sale "A few choice pot-plants, including Verbenas, Geraniums, Ice-plants, Pansies, Antirrhinum, etc., also choice Carnations, Hadwigii, China grass and other Pink roots in autumn," as well as "Fruit and other Utah novelties," among them "Deseret current, *Gilia longiflora* (Scarlet), scarlet pansy, Thousand-flowered Cone Cactus, a beautiful white variegated lily, and a few other desirable and beautiful sorts." The subscription price of the **Oracle** was two dollars a year and its advertising space sold for ten cents a line, but "Hymenial and Obituary Notices, and Reports of Agricultural, Manufacturing and Literary Societies, and Fairs" were published without charge.

The **Oracle** lasted about two years; probably it ended with the abandonment of the settlement at Spring Lake Villa. Later, Johnson had moved to Saint George, in the extreme southwestern corner of Utah. On January 22, 1868, he there began the publication of a weekly which he called at first **Our Dixie Times**.<sup>3</sup> The following May, the name was changed to **Rio Virgen Times**. This paper is said to have continued for about one year.

After the **Farmer's Oracle** at Spring Lake Villa, the next undertaking of the press in Utah outside of Salt Lake City was the **Union Vedette**, published at Camp Douglas, a military post immediately adjacent to Salt Lake City, "by officers and enlisted men, for the California & Nevada Territorial Volunteers." This began on November 20, 1863, as a four-page four-column weekly. On January 5, 1864, the publishers, who remained anonymous, added the **Daily Vedette**, the first daily in Utah. The intention at first was to continue both the daily and the weekly editions, but as the subscribers showed a decided preference for the daily, with its telegraphic news, the weekly was discontinued with the issue of January 14, 1864. Beginning January 27th, the daily was enlarged to the size of the former weekly and took the name **Daily Union Vedette**.

<sup>2</sup>In 1852, he had bought the *Bugle*, at Kanessville (now Council Bluffs), Iowa, and from that office issued the *Omaha Arrow*, printed in Iowa, but intended for circulation in the Nebraska settlement. In 1860 he was publishing the *Huntsman's Echo* at Wood River Center, Nebraska.

<sup>3</sup>The Latter-Day Saints Library at Salt Lake City has vol. 1, no. 6, February 26, 1868.

In July, 1865, Great Salt Lake City was substituted for Camp Douglas in the date line of the *Vedette*, and the page was again enlarged, to 14 by 20½ inches, six columns. After it had become a Salt Lake City paper, the *Vedette* passed into civilian ownership with the issue of October 22, 1866, when P. L. Shoaff & Co. appeared as publishers. The recorded file ends in November, 1867.<sup>4</sup>

The establishment of a press at Saint George by Joseph E. Johnson in January, 1868, has already been mentioned. There is a record of a second paper started in that remote locality in the same year. It was the *Cactus*, published by Sangiovanni & Co. The only extant copy of this paper that I know of is Vol. 1, No. 2, September 19, 1868, in the library of the Masonic Grand Lodge at Salt Lake City. It is a little four-page affair, measuring barely 6 by 8 inches, and crudely printed.

The next Utah point, other than the capital, to have a press was probably Ogden, to which place the *Daily Telegraph* was removed from Salt Lake City in May, 1869. But the paper could not survive the change and was taken back to the capital the following August. Ogden was not long, however, without a paper of its own. On January 1, 1870, Franklin D. Richards started there the *Ogden Junction*, a semi-weekly. Richards withdrew from the enterprise soon after its inception and was succeeded by Charles W. Penrose. The paper was later renamed the *Ogden Herald*.<sup>5</sup> The present-day *Standard-Examiner* at Ogden traces its descent from the *Junction* of 1870.

Provo seems to have received its first press with the establishment of the *Provo Daily Times* on August 1, 1873. This paper had many changes of name, appearing successively as the *Provo Tri-Weekly Times*, the *Utah County Times*, the *Utah County Advertiser*, and the *Territorial Enquirer*. Among its early editors were R. T. McEwen, R. G. Sleater, S. T. McEwen, and John C. Graham.<sup>6</sup>

Early in 1874, the *Beaver Enterprise*, established by Joseph Field, brought the press to Beaver City for the first time.<sup>7</sup> This location thus became the fifth Utah printing point, outside of Salt Lake City, of which record has been found. Next was Silver Reef, a now extinct mining camp ten or fifteen miles northward from Saint George, where the *Silver Reef Echo* was established on February 24, 1877, by Joseph E. Johnson of whom we last had record at Saint George. This paper was probably purchased

<sup>4</sup>Information concerning the *Vedette* is derived from the file in the Salt Lake City Public Library.

<sup>5</sup>From a manuscript account of Mormon journalism by Franklin D. Richards, in the Bancroft Library. It contains a record of Mormon publications down to July, 1884.

<sup>6</sup>Information from the Richards manuscript.

<sup>7</sup>*Op. cit.*

by Crouch and Louder and renamed the **Miner**, which was successively edited by James N. Louder, Scipio A. Kenner, and Edward and John Pike.<sup>8</sup>

With these few notes, the available record of the Utah country press in the early days may be said to end. The record as it stands is admittedly faulty, and corrections and additions are much to be desired. Particularly desired is information about the old-time printers and editors. Also welcome would be notes of copies of old Utah country newspapers of the seventies and earlier. It is suggested that these notes should contain not only the dates of the papers, but also their volume and serial numbers and mention of the names of the publishers.

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### EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF HENRY W. BIGLER\*

Wed. 11th. We traveled about 28 miles, across a dry plain, suffering much with heat and thirst, to a river. I thought I would die for want of water before we reached the river. Many did give out by the way and were only refreshed by sending them full canteens of water.

Thurs. 12th. Camp laid by while Captain Everett and a few pioneers went up the river to examine the route and to look for Walker's Pass, leading over the mountains.

Fri. 13th. To-day we moved camp up the river ten miles, where we met Captain Everett and men who reported that they found nothing like a pass and that we could not cross the mountains with our pack animals. A meeting was immediately called at which it was decided that we take Fremont's route and go by way of Sutter's Fort, for we had no good map for the one we had brought from Los Angeles did not have the rivers marked in it, nor the names of streams, and to tell the truth we do not know where we are, only that we are somewhere in the mountains.

Sat. 14th. The next morning we retraced our steps a few miles and crossed the river about 75 yards wide and made an early camp. Here we were visited by Indians. We told them we were their friends and did not wish to hurt them. They told us we could lie down in peace and sleep. They sang and danced in their way, which to us was quite amusing.

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<sup>8</sup>Mark A. Pendleton. "Memories of Silver Reef," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 4, October, 1930, pp. 99-118, at p. 108.

\*Continued from the *Quarterly* for April, 1932.